(d) The Government of Rajasthan had sent a proposal for meeting educational scholarship for Rs. 90 lakhs during 2004-05. However, because of the incomplete proposal from the State Government, funds could not be sanctioned.

(e) No, Sir.

Women married before legal age

4276. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the latest National Family Health Survey carried out in 29 States, nearly 45 per cent women in the country, aged 20-24 years were married off before they reached 18 years, the legal age to marry;

(b) whether it is a fact that this social malady exists mostly in rural areas and lack of education is responsible for this trend; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to ensure that the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1976 is implemented effectively by all the States in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) As per provisional results of National Family Health Survey-Ill (NFHS-lll)-(2005-06), at all India level 44.5% of the women aged between 20-24 are married by 18 years of age. As per the survey 52.5% of these women resided in rural areas and 71.6% did not have any education.

(c) In order to prohibit child marriages and to make the provisions of the Act more effective and punishment more stringent for offenders, a new legislation "The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006" (No. 6 of 2007) has been notified in the Gazette of India on 11th January, 2007. Also, awareness generation and advocacy measures are continuously being undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in this connection.